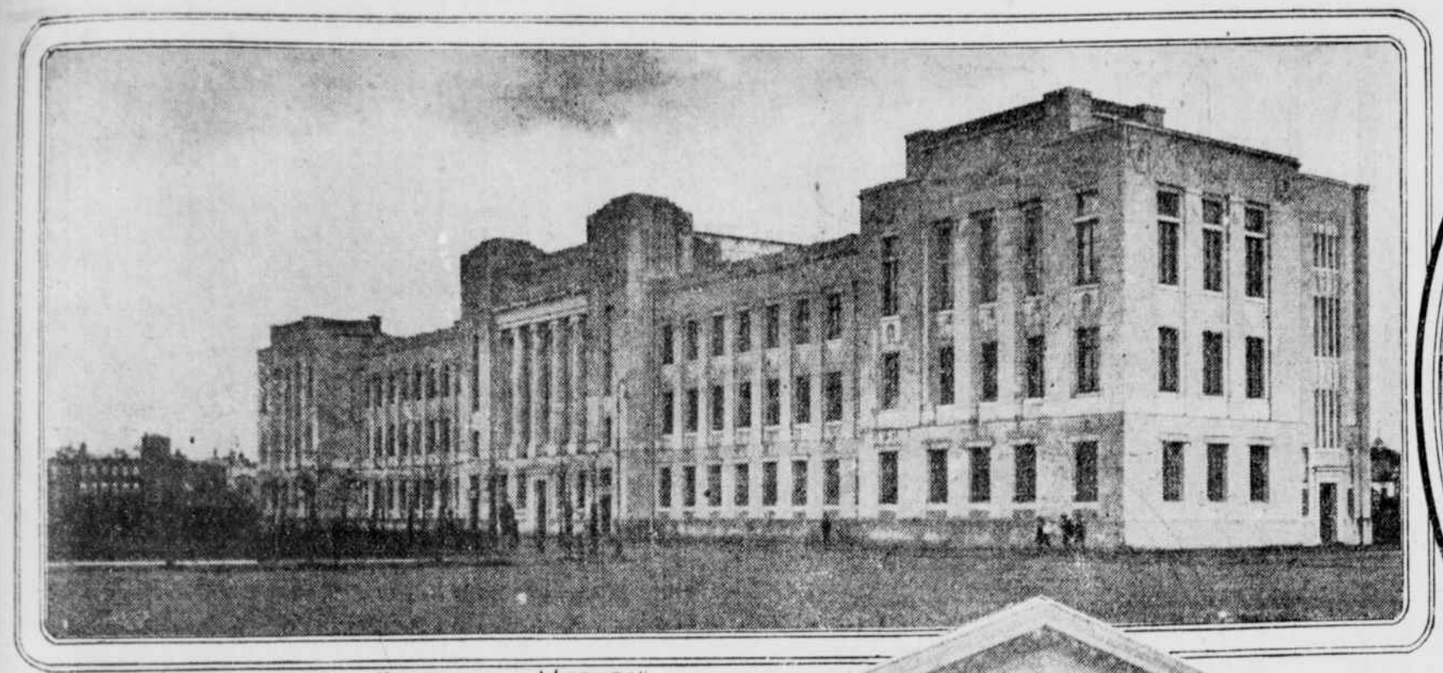
STUDIES AMERICA'S LIBRARIES FOR BENEFIT OF RUSSIA



LIBRARY of SHANIAWSKY UNIVERSITY ~ MOSCOW

MADAME L. HAFFKIN HAMBURGER

THE LIBRARY of CONGRESS ~ Rotunda of Main Reading Room

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Madame Haffkin-Hamburger, Who Has Made Long Trip to Learn Secrets of Uncle Sam's Custodians of Books, Tells How Such Things Are Done in Russia.

Russian Woman, Now in This City, Is Library Expert of Czar's Realms.

By FREDERIC DEAN.

"WE MAY not have such lions as these to guard them," pointing to one of the monstrosities in front of our booklovers' palace on Fifth av., "but it may surprise you to learn that we have over 20,000 public libraries in Russia—some of them worthy of comparison with the best in other places."

The speaker, a soft-voiced little lady with a charming Russian accent, had just been exploring the ins and outs of the big building behind her, and was on her way to some of the less pretentious, but possibly equally interesting, branches of the Public Library on the East Side of the town. Further inquiries elicited the fact that the modest lady with the appealing voice and kindly eyes was Mme. Haffkin-Hamburger, secretary and lecturer of the library courses in the Shaniawsky University at Moscow and honorary member of the bibliographical society of the Imperial University; that she has been in America but a few weeks—her first visit—and is expecting to return home in the early autumn. While here she is in search of knowledge about our methods, not only in the housing of and caring for books, but also our systems of teaching librarians.

Interested in all of the great libraries of the world, Madame is particularly desirous of learning at first-hand the secret of the American librarian—that almost perfected handler of books and certainly the most systematic and efficient manipulator of large numbers of volumes the world of to-day can show.

INTERSPERSED HER STUDIES WITH LECTURES ON HER WORK.

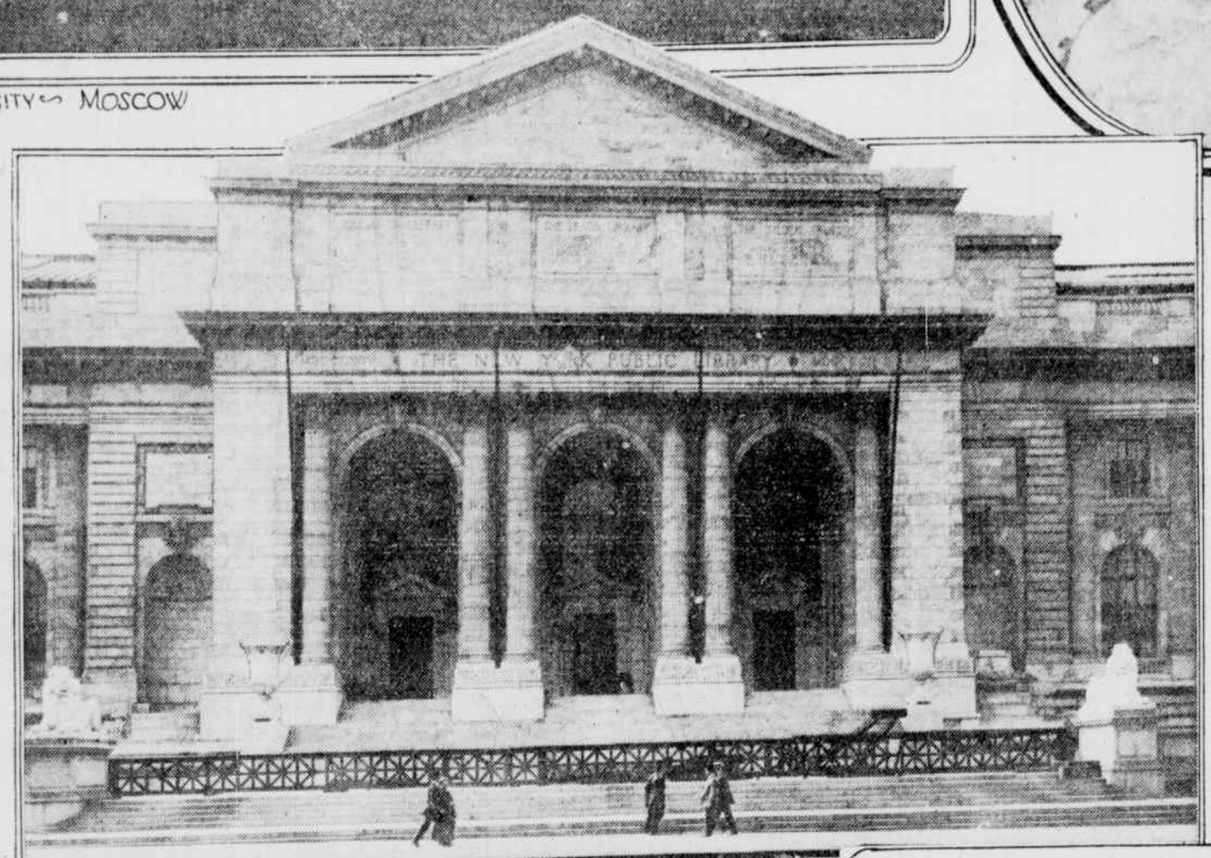
Realizing that she could find out more about the care and custody of books in the United States than anywhere else, Madame came to New York early in June and went direct to the State Library in Albany, where she not only studied our systems but lectured upon her own, using colored pictures to illustrate her work and the workers in St. Petersburg, Moscow and other Russian centres. Later she will take her slides to Ithaca, to show the Cornell students how the great mass of readers in Russia utilize the opportunities given them of reaching the literatures of the civilized world. During the summer her plans will take her up to Lake Placid and to other points, where she is to meet the leaders of the library movement of the state and the country—spending more or less time in the Congressional Library at Washington and darting about here and there among the best known collections of books within easy reach of Broadway.

Speaking with almost equal fluency in English, French, German and Russian, this cosmopolite, linguist, student of affairs and woman of the world must prove of immense value to the university that has honored itself in honoring her. Madame has touched life from so many differing angles it is difficult for her to talk upon any given topic without unusual interest. But books have been her delight for so long it is equally difficult to keep her from talking about them and their use to the public—particularly to the Russian public.

RUSSIA'S FIRST PUBLIC LIBRARY IN TOWN OF CARCOV.

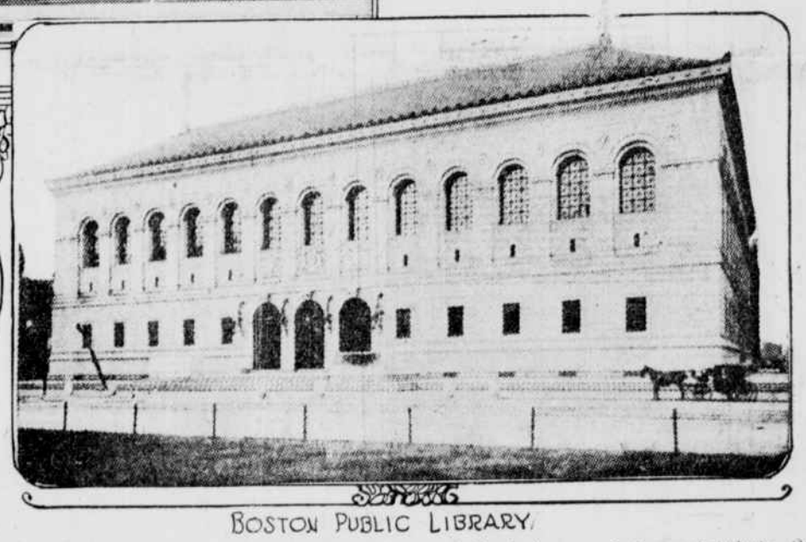
Madame began her work in her home town of Carcov, in Little Russia, the town in which was started not only the first popular library of her country, but—what is more interesting still—the most remarkable Sunday school in Russia, and perhaps in the world. Madame Altchevski, a woman of great ability and energy, had petitioned for permission to start and carry on a school on Sundays, not a school for Biblical study, but a school—a secular school—for those who were busily engaged on other days and could in no other way obtain an education. Beginning with a handful of enthusiasts, the "school" grew to such proportions that Mme. Altchevski was forced to devote to it her entire time and her entire fortune as well. To-day the little lady who inaugurated this boon for the unschooled is teaching in her own school, a paid assistant in the institution which she founded with her talent and money.

It was in this school—the home of many of Russia's advancements in knowledge—that was started this first popular library. Having no means to employ librarians, and hardly with enough money to buy the requisite books, the founders of this new institution called for volunteers—volunteers with both time and money to devote to the new library—and the helpers came in dozens. The young ladies of the town, the daughters of the first families, brought their unskilled efforts and their immature bank accounts to the assistance of this pride of the town—a centre of culture and refinement and wealth—and ably helped by the professors and other teachers they soon made of it one of the best public libraries in all Russia. To this school came Mme. Hamburger, then a slip of a girl of sixteen, just graduated from the gymnasium and too young for the university. The schooling learned in this volunteer library proved to be the beginning of her life work, and once graduated from the university she returned with renewed enthusiasm to the betterment of library conditions in Russia. Her husband, a banker of means, had instituted a series of small banks over the country. Since his death, three years ago, Mme. Hamburger has devoted her life and her fortune to the enrichment of the library facilities of Russia.



MAIN ENTRANCE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

PAPYRUS ROLLS IN AN OLD ROMAN LIBRARY



BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

TWO MEN WHO HELPED MIGHTILY IN THE CAUSE.

"We were fortunate," says Madame, "in having Professor Bagaley, professor of history, in our local university at the time we started our Carcov library. He has been of immense help to us, and is now one of the members of the state council. Another man of importance who has benefited the cause in more ways than one is the former vice-president of our committee. He was the vice-president of the first Douma held in Russia. To him was given the organization of the library. He is still a member of our board of trustees.

"There are two kinds of libraries in Russia—(1) the state library and (2) the university library. The state library is the Imperial Library of St. Petersburg, which is the third largest library in the world. Other libraries of size and importance are at Warsaw and Moscow. The library at Warsaw is the larger of the two. The one at Moscow is better known out of Russia. Other libraries are used in connection with the technical schools or institutes—at Tomsk, in Siberia, for example, and at Kief. In all, there are eight hundred public libraries in the towns of Russia and over twenty thousand in the rural districts.

"Our so-called 'public libraries' differ from those here in America in not being free. We charge a small fee for the books. About $1 50 covers the annual charge for the use of a card calling for one book at a time, and about $2 50 for the use of two books. Our libraries are not free, because the government does not give them to the public. In the case of the public museums, however, the libraries are free. There are eleven of these museums. The other libraries are supported by the people of the towns and villages, or by societies.

"There are 'popular' libraries all over Europe—in England, Germany, Italy—but these are a mistake in this: They cater to the laboring classes, and because the laboring classes are far ahead of the same laboring classes of a few years ago and grow in this direction very fast, the constant demand for more and more advanced books becomes more and more apparent. As they need more, more should be given them, and the lack of these advanced books is the cause of the weakness of this particular library system.

"In Russia we have two very trying hindrances in the way of library advancement: (1) The 'Circular' of the Minister of Education, and (2) the prohibition of books 'with a dangerous tendency.' Away back in 1800 a 'Circular' was issued by the Minister of Education limiting all books for the public libraries to a list approved by the Minister. As the authorities were exceedingly slow in examining the books for the libaries—all of which had been properly submitted—the readers get some of them long after they were of use to them, and some of them were never received. All the works of Tolstoy, for example, were tabooed, as were the poems of our poet of peasantry and serfdom, Nektassoff. Many others of the advanced trend were also sacrificed—to the detriment of both our libraries and our readers. Fortunately, 1907, this 'Circular' was abolished and to-day every library may have any book it desires to buy and put on its shelves—that is nominally and theoretically. In reality, the books are often more restricted than ever. And this compels mention of another feature of the long ago.

"Years ago there were what were called 'preliminary censors,' whose business it was to pass upon every manuscript presented to them for consideration. Now the books are printed without being seen by the censors, but they are no sooner on the shelves for sale than their sales are liable to be prohibited by any one of these three institutions: (1) The Main Printing Press of St. Petersburg, (2) the Court of Justice and (3) the local government. Possibly these 'local governors' have the largest liberty, for they may prohibit the sale of any book that they, individually, consider 'dangerous.' The mere stamping upon a book the words, 'The tendency of this book is dangerous' rules it out of the country; and the farce of it all is that one governor may consider a certain book 'dangerous' and it may be read with impunity in every surrounding province. This arbitrary cutting off of books already printed and put on sale is most disheartening to the library worker and gatherer of books.

LIBRARY MAY BE CLOSED IF ONE SUCH BOOK IS FOUND.

"There is another and still more trying outcome of this individual censorship. By the mere finding of one objectionable book in any given library the governor of the province in which the book is found has the right not only to confiscate that particular book, but may shut up the entire library by reason of the open display of this one objectionable volume. But times have changed—and for the better in many ways—and the books have improved in the same ratio, and to-day we have a very fair list from which to make our choice. Then, too, we have the right to protest against any ruling that we think prejudicial to our interests, and this protest we may take to the Supreme Court.

"The formation of our little collections of books may be interesting to you Americans. In Russia what corresponds to your American 'county' is called a 'district'; our 'government,' a collection of 'districts,' supplies the place, in large measure, of your state. In every district is a local assembly called the 'zemstvo'—an assembly of land taxpayers—which from its members elects a board of governors, to which is given the guidance of the health of the people, as well as the good roads of the territory, the telephones, the hospitals, the agronomy of the surrounding country, the schools and the system of libraries. From a central library in any district emanate any number of branches, scattered among the villages near by. We have, also, a number of travelling libraries, and out of the entire system has grown up a veritable network of libraries. And, when it is remembered that within a radius of from three to five kilometres (from two to three-and-a-half miles) from any house there is a library, and that this system is constantly growing, it is readily understood what a tremendous influence the libraries of Russia are exerting. Every year substantial additions are made to this or that district or government, and it is for this growth that I am here in America, trying to study out some better system than that in use for the collection, the selection and distribution of our books.

VARYING DENSITY OF POPULATION IN THE DISTRICTS.

"Naturally, in some districts our population is more dense than in others. In some government cities are many and close together; in others there are but few large congregations of persons, the great portion of the land being given up to farm houses and large tracts of farming interests. For this reason no definite number of readers can be approximated for any given sized territory—each must be judged by its own density of population.

"In another matter we are singularly unlike some of our neighboring countries. Our government furnishes no funds for the collection of our libraries or for their maintenance. In every case the funds are procured by the zemstvo, into whose hands are entrusted the books and the care of them. The only government libraries are those governed by what is called the 'Committee of Temperance.' As the government has the monopoly on the sale and distribution of whiskey, this seeming monopoly on the sale and distribution of books is a bit of a misnomer. It is a well-known fact, also, that these libraries, supported by the 'Committee of Temperance,' are the poorest of our Russian collections, and not only this, but they are run in the most slip-shod manner.

"The difficulties of our library systems are twofold: (1) The complicated legislation of our government, and (2) the lack of funds for the carrying on of the necessary work attending the development of library plans. And right here comes in the work in which our university—the Shaniawski University—is entering with such zest. This university was founded but five years ago, and already has over six thousand students. One of our main courses is that for the training of librarians. Of course, it is impossible to bring about great improvements all at once, but for the time given to this branch of our work we think we have made progress. In December last the matter was brought to the notice of the heads of the institution, and has since been carried to fulfilment. It owes much of its success to a gentleman who, although a millionaire, makes his home in a back yard lodging and gives lavishly to others, while living in the plainest manner himself. His name is Shaklov.

"During the first year of our activity in the matter of these special courses we received applications from over 400 students. Of these we admitted 300 and were forced to refuse the others for lack of accommodation. This year we limited our new students to 300. In all, we have admitted 557 for this special work during the three years we have had opportunity for offering these branches to our students.

"The demands for libraries come from all sorts of places and people. One of the last requests for a library that we received before I came awa/ was from a group of peasants living in the north in the government of Penza. 'We have a school,' they wrote, 'but no library. The school and the library are sisters. Our school is lonely without her sister. Please, can we not have our library to comfort her?'"

HER BOOK GAINED FIRST PRIZE AT THE LIEGE EXPOSITION.

Madame has a mind and temper of singular originality and shrewdness; she has gained a knowledge of the world and of the world's readers uniquely and astoundingly comprehensive; in her travels she has found many vivid and striking characters; her conversation sparkles with happy phrases and epithets; she is never egotistic, never parades her own personality; but one cannot listen to her for twenty minutes without recognizing an intellectuality that is in sympathy with whatever is fine and select and worth while; even when her English halts and wavers, it halts and wavers in search of the exact word or phrase to express her meaning, and when found the word or phrase is a bit better than was at first expected. Unfortunately, madame's book on the care and use of books, strictly a manual for librarians, is written only in Russian. (It can be found in any of the Slav branches of the New York Public Library.)

LUXEMBURG, A TINY BUFFER

JUST as the small kingdom of Servia was the storm centre of this war in the east of Europe, the muuch smaller grand duchy of Luxemburg has become, through German invasion, the storm centre in the east. Thus attention is called to a tiny state whose independent existence is often overlooked, yet whose history has been full of interest. All that is left of it now is an area not half as large as the State of Delaware, with a population of about 260,000. Yet it has a history more than eight centuries old and for many years it has been an object of the rival desires of France and Germany.

Luxemburg, lying where three realms meet—Belgium, France and Germany—was a part of the Belgica Prima of Roman times, and as such figures in Cæsar' immortal "Commentaries." Later it was a part of the Frankish kingdom of Austrasia. Its first independent ruler was Count Conrad, in 1060, and at that time it was many times larger than at present and ranked as a country of much political and military importance.

Count Henry IV of Luxemburg was elected Emperor of Germany, or of the "Holy Roman Empire," and his son John was that King of Bohemia who fell at Crecy. In 1354 Luxemburg became a duchy, and not long afterward it passed into the possession of the Hapsburgs and formed an important part of the historic Austrian Netherlands.

It was conquered and annexed by France in 1795, and remained in that status until the fall of Napoleon, when it was made a grand duchy and was placed under the sovereignty of the King of Holland. When the Netherlands were divided, in 1831, all that then remained of Luxemburg was divided also, part of it going to Belgium, of which it now forms an important part, and the remainder, the present grand duchy, being confirmed as a possession of the House of Orange. Thus it remained until 1890, when William III of Holland died and was succeeded by his daughter Wilhelmina. The Salic law was then invoked against the succession of a woman in Luxemburg, so long at least as any male heir, however remote, was to be found; and in consequence Adolf, Duke of Nassau, who had been deposed by Prussia in 1866 for siding with Austria, was made grand duke.

But the Salic law was bound to be flouted after all. Adolf died in 1905 and was succeeded by his son William, who in turn died in 1912, leaving not a single male relative in any degree. Then the Nassau family law took precedence over the Salic law. It provided that in case of the entire extinction of the male line the succession should go to the female heir. Accordingly the Grand Duchess Marie Adelaide, daughter of William, succeeded. She was the eldest of six sisters, and her mother and grandmother and an aunt were living, but there was not a single male left in the family.

The little country has long been coveted by both France and Germany, with Germany enjoying the favored position. Down to its dismantlement, in 1872, the great fortress of Luxemburg, one of the famous Vauban's masterpieces, was garrisoned by Prussians. Since that time the country has been a member of the German customs union, and its chief railroads have been leased to the German government for a long term of years.

It is because of this latter circumstance that the German government assumed to have the right to transport its troops across Luxemburg territory, holding that since it leased the railroads it had a right to use them as it pleased.

The people of Luxemburg speak a strange mixture of the French and German languages. Probably about half the words are French and half are German. The strangest effect is produced by the use of French words in German arrangement, as, for example, putting a French verb at the very end of a long sentence, as is often done in Germany. The people are, however, intensely patriotic, and are opposed to being annexed to either France or Germany, their antipathy being by far the stronger toward the latter.